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[Interview with Libyan leader Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi by Muhammad Jasim al-Saqr, *AL-QABAS* chief editor, in Tripoli — date not given]

[Text] This interview with Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the Libyan revolution, took place after midnight in the same tent in which he had received Syrian Vice President 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam a little earlier. Khaddam visited Tripoli in order to inform him of the results of the efforts of the Arab reconciliation committee.

As usual, Al-Qadhdhafi was frank during the confrontational dialogue and head-to-head talk with *AL-QABAS* chief editor Muhammad Jasim al-Saqr. He was extremely frank in answering the questions posed by *AL-QABAS*. The questions themselves were bold and confrontational regarding the Libyan leader's stands, ideas, political analyses, and pan-Arab initiatives. The dialogue does not need a long introduction. It is long and frank and cannot be summarized in a few lines. Following is the interview, word for word, as recorded:

AL-QABAS: To begin with, we would like you to be patient with the questions that we will ask during this meeting. In fact they express the opinion of the simple, ordinary man in the Arab street. We also hope that brother Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi will tolerate some expressions of wonder that might appear to be in poor taste or exceed the known limits in an open dialogue with an Arab leader.

Al-Qadhdhafi: You are welcome. As you know, I speak with utter frankness. I have nothing to hide. A short while ago I heard some radio stations saying that I was the target of an assassination attempt. I do not understand how they can broadcast such fabricated reports.

AL-QABAS: Actually we have not heard such a report. By the way, what is your comment on such assassination reports?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Anybody can be the target of assassination. It is not a process that is rejected. Valiant men, cowards, traitors, and free men alike might be subjected to assassination. Even prophets were subjected to it. Al-Sadat was assassinated. An assassination can be carried out by a nonentity such as 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljim, who assassinated 'Ali ibn Abu Talib [the fourth Muslim caliph] or a valiant man like Khalid al-Islambuli, who assassinated Al-Sadat. However, when there is no assassination and news is fabricated about it, then it becomes ridiculous. Egyptian papers rejoice in such a method and fabricate reports that are totally unfounded — coups d'etat, involvements, executions.

AL-QABAS: What are the facts about the recent rebellion against you, as reported by an Egyptian newspaper?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Let us suppose that some military units disobeyed the orders I issued to attack Tunisia, as they say. The rebels aside, has the attack actually taken place? [laughs]

AL-QABAS: Brother Mu'ammarr, before we begin to ask questions, we have noticed that brother 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam has been with you. No doubt he has come to inform you of the results of the efforts of the Arab reconciliation committee chaired by [Saudi crown prince] Prince 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. Is it possible to learn what took place during your meeting with Khaddam?

Al-Qadhdhafi: He has actually put us in the picture with regard to the activity of the committee. However, our objective analysis of the issue is that when there is a bilateral dispute, reconciliation can be achieved between the two sides when one party or the other makes a concession and the problem is resolved. When the disagreement is a political and essential one regarding pan-Arab causes, however, then reconciliation does not work. This means that it is not a matter for reconciliation. The disagreement with Syria, for instance, is not one over borders or matters of friction and other problems which respond to reconciliation. Not at all, the disagreement is over a pan-Arab cause. There will never be a reconciliation unless one of the parties backs down from its treasonous stands, or the other party moves from a correct stand to treason. How can you have reconciliation between a steadfast party and a treasonous one. To those who speak of Arab fraternity, I say there is no fraternity in such matters.

AL-QABAS: Can we achieve a minimum of agreement on basic issues, in preparation for the holding of the future Arab summit in Saudi Arabia?

Al-Qadhdhafi: These are, in reality, tranquilizers. Even the convening of the summit is a tranquilizer and does not resolve essential issues. All the Arabs have unity of soil and political unity [as published]. This means that there must necessarily be a clash. The motto of unity and confrontation is what imposes itself on us. It is possible for us and Tunisia to reconcile the issue of the Tunisian workers or the issue of borders or tourism. If Libya has expelled Tunisians, this is a matter on which one party can make a concession and reconciliation can follow. However, when the disagreement is over the pan-Arab cause, then there is no room for reconciliation. How can one reconcile with Al-Sadat, who recognized Israel, when we do not recognize something called Israel at all?

AL-QABAS: We are talking about the minimum level of agreement among Arab countries. We know that there are red lines that cannot be exceeded. However, differences are sweeping through the entire Arab world, differences among governments. Why should the Arab people suffer from this tragic situation? The Arab people have good intentions and reject this situation we now face due to the continued differences among Arab rulers and governments.

Al-Qadhdhafi: This supports the theory of the people saving themselves from governments and rulers so that they can survive. The people will live and there will be no problem. If governments, armies, and organs go, popular congresses and committees will

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be set up as part of the masses system of each state. Peace will be established in the Arab world, indeed in the entire world, because people do not harbor ill intentions toward each other and do not invade each other. We hope that Arab governments, parliaments, parties, classes, and even Arab armies defeated in wars will disappear and be replaced by armed people and Arab masses who do not harbor malice. This is our call for unity of the Arab masses.

AL-QABAS: On the occasion of the 16th anniversary of the 1 September revolution, you proposed the theory that democracy, rule by the people, means that the people govern themselves instead of being represented. It is said that this experiment will probably succeed in Libya, for example, because Libya is not densely populated, but would be difficult to implement in other Arab countries with high population density. What is your comment?

Al-Qadhdhafi: On the contrary. A small country can be governed by central rule; it is possible for the ruler to steer things from the capital. The masses system becomes necessary when the population is large; it is not feasible for the leaders in Beijing to rule 1 billion people living in the PRC. The world Jamahiriyyah means autonomous rule or popular rule and comprehensive self rule because the masses rule themselves. A state council in Beijing cannot be familiar with all the PRC's problems without bases of local rule in each region. Also, in India we find that the central government in New Delhi is unable to rule Punjab and other provinces in India because the larger the population and the larger the country, the greater the need for a masses system.

AL-QABAS: But when the population is not large there will not be many popular committees. In big countries like the PRC and India, popular committees will be many; this will lead to disorder and mismanagement.

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, No. Congresses and committees everywhere mean popular congresses and popular committees here and there. These committees can meet and form general committees. It is possible for all the committees to form another general committee, according to the size of the population. The larger the country and the denser the population, the greater the need for the masses system because the world is moving toward popular rule. The future is for popular rule and the people will achieve it. This is now very clear all over the world, wherever opposition expands and wherever its participation in ruling becomes larger instead of the decisionmaking being kept confined to the individual and the autocrat. What is taking place now shows that all classes of people seek to participate in the rule and that opposition movements are becoming larger and are turning into fronts. This movement cannot halt in the middle of the road; it will not stop before all the people achieve rule. You can see with your own eyes that rule moves from one party to two parties and then to three or four, until participation moves from the bottom to the top, like a cone. This march continues and is inevitable; the masses are now participating in the rule. Parliamentary experiments are becoming ridiculous and parliamentary representation has proven false, because there cannot be representation for the people when the people are there. Parliamentary experiments are dying; they are in one world and the people are in another.

AL-QABAS: Brother leader, we want to speak about Kuwaiti-Libyan relations. These relations are characterized by stability and mutual fraternal understanding between two political leaderships in fraternal countries. Considering your meetings with the Kuwaiti officials, what is your assessment of Libyan-Kuwaiti relations and what is the role of Kuwait in the Arab arena?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I say that nothing can disturb the clear atmosphere between the two countries. There is mutual respect, confidence, and brotherhood as well. We have joint political, economic, and military coordination. We not only exchange amity and sentiments, but we strive to achieve material and positive coordination for the sake of the two countries, particularly since they do not rely on one another. The oil rich countries which are not densely populated do not rely on each other. They have joint projects to assist in clearing the atmosphere. Nonetheless, Kuwait has a respectful role. I like Kuwaiti positions despite the countries' location in a tense region. Actually Kuwait is against hegemony and arrogance. Once I visited that country. I told them: I would like to congratulate you on your independent decisionmaking and your stances. I had no other topic to discuss, but I deliberately wanted to say that and add that we laud Kuwait's stances and its independent decisionmaking.

AL-QABAS: Since our talk is about Kuwait's role and cooperation with Libya, we would like to draw your attention to the trend toward Arab blocs which has recently surfaced. The GCC, the integration between Sudan and Egypt, and the great Arab Maghreb project are examples of such blocs. Do you view this phenomenon as a step to achieve the great national goal of comprehensive Arab unity, or will these blocs lead, as others say, to the fixing of regional blocs in the great Arab homeland?

Al-Qadhdhafi: To God, the ideal of course is to achieve comprehensive Arab unity without blocs and axes. What is happening is totally different. Groupings are formed due to the deteriorating situation and fear that the Arab nation will disappear and fall apart. People have begun to accept these blocs as a fact and to encourage them so as to salvage what has remained. This is better than the disappearance and the destruction of the Arab nation. I wish that these blocs would become countries. It is better to have four great countries with conflicts than 20 backward countries. In this regard, I feel that there is a danger facing Arabism and the Arab nation. There is a great danger dashing hopes to achieve Arab unity. The current trend is for the state to rise above the nation. For example, there are Libyan, Kuwaiti, Algerian, and Syrian states. This trend distances us from Arabism, the nation, and unity. It is very dangerous and is our downfall, because midget states cannot exist in our time; they do not possess the characteristics to exist in the future.

AL-QABAS: Supporting your argument, we regrettably observe this dangerous trend to be everywhere, even in broadcasting stations and songs. All these factors enhance regional blocs. The trend to establish Arabism and unity, which we encountered during the era of the late Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, has disappeared. Even the educational curriculum is currently devoted to deepening the idea of regional blocs among the new generation.

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Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes, the concept of the state replaces the concept of the nation. It is a very dangerous trend. I cannot see that even my country will be able to exist in this era, the era of the giants, the great blocs, and the great potential to reach outer space. No Arab country is able to build a satellite, rockets to reach the moon, aircraft carriers, fighters, or submarines. We do not have these capabilities.

The national income of Italy, for instance, exceeds the total national income of all Arab countries. The Arabs believe that they are rich countries. They believe that Libya or Kuwait are among the rich countries. If all Arab countries were joined they would form a country equal in size to Nigeria, for instance, or Yugoslavia. In the future, every Arab country will, for instance, be incapable of solving the education problem. The Arab countries will be incapable of absorbing the new generations. There are actually Arab countries presently incapable of absorbing the new children in schools because they do not have the resources to do so. This implies that the Arabs will suffer anew from the proliferation of illiteracy. This is a genuine danger. We have two options — either we attain Arab unity by force before this nation collapses, or the Arabs sit at a round table and draft the union plan according to prevailing conditions.

I opted for proceeding with the peaceful solution of the unionist pan-Arab trend and presented a unionist draft plan, which was conveyed to all the Arab countries. I set forth that a union could be established among the currently existing regimes. It is the nature of the plan to preserve the existence of every regime in order to prompt the Arabs to accept the union plan. According to the plan, all the Arab leaders would become members of a presidential council. The chairmanship of the council would be rotated among the leaders. Thus there would be an opportunity for every Arab leader to be president of all the Arabs during a rotational period. In addition, a union ministerial council would be formed. Chairmanship would be rotated among Arab prime ministers. In other words, all Arab prime ministers would have the opportunity to be the prime minister of all the Arabs, and so forth. This is the last opportunity to establish Arab unity, or the flood will come!

The Arab countries are currently midget countries. They have only this opportunity to attain Arab unity. Many are opposed to unity because they wish to defend their positions. The plan preserves their positions and, moreover, paves the way for expanded authority of their positions and make those stances more comprehensive. This is the political aspect of the plan. As for the context, the union includes a number of economic and financial plans. It includes the formation of an Arab body for seed and food. The duties of this body would be to ensure Arab self-sufficiency in those areas. Another body for gas would be established to provide a network linking all Arab countries. Similarly, a body for water would be established to link all the Arab rivers. The project of the great Arab river, in which Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did not take part, would be implemented. The rivers, such as the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, would be linked through a unionist effort to convert the Arab Sahara into vast green areas.

AL-QABAS: This is a genuine act at the Arab world level...

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes, in the field of scientific research a body for scientific research would then gather all the efforts of the scientists in the Arab world. Success in the technical field cannot be attained under the situation that currently exists in the Arab world. For example, not a single Arab country is capable of achievements in the fields of nuclear energy or lasers, or in manufacturing airplanes. Even the European countries, though each is equal to all the Arab countries, cannot manufacture airplanes on their own. France, Britain, and Italy combine efforts to manufacture a single plane. They succeed in manufacturing civilian or war aircraft only through the joint efforts of huge and advanced countries. We, in the Arab world, have no future. That is why I proposed the union plan which includes economic and political frameworks. If the Arab leaders do not accept this plan, there will be revenge. Violence will certainly ensue.

AL-QABAS: Did you receive replies from the Arab leaders on the plan?

Al-Qadhdhafi: We received some replies. The foremost was from [UAE President] Shaykh Zayid and one from Kuwait. There were other replies. No one said no, but all said that the Arabs have to convene and peruse the plan.

AL-QABAS: You said a while ago that if the plan is rejected, revenge will begin. We do not understand what this means.

Al-Qadhdhafi: This means that the Arab citizen himself will carry out revenge, because if Arab rulers do not accept this peace proposal to bring them together to forge this union willingly, they will destroy our future. I am sure that the Arab citizen will take revenge against his rulers. I will then be the first to encourage revenge and to incite disorder in the Arab world. I will be the first to encourage disrespect for lands, borders, thrones, and all artificial considerations.

AL-QABAS: Do you really see that in the current Arab situation the ordinary Arab citizen can defy the authorities?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Revenge will begin and I will be the first to encourage rebellion, revolution, and disorder, after which the Arab nation will be saved. The Arab nation has to endure surgery, which will involve much blood, sweat, and victims, until the nation is united. We will be forced to undertake adventure to save the Arab nation, because when one has a dying relative in need of a serious operation to save his life, one makes him undergo this operation at all costs. Is that not true?

AL-QABAS: But we are now facing a different situation in the Arab world. During the past years, an Islamic trend has emerged as a rival to Arabism. Perhaps the Iraq-Iran war underlines the conflict between those seeking to unite the Arab nation and those defending it. This contradiction continues with the continued Gulf war.

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, the situation is not like that. Neither this side is fighting for Islamic unity nor that side is defending the Arabs' gate.

AL-QABAS: Some raise these slogans. An example is the widespread Islamic current in the region.

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Al-Qadhdhafi: Religion has nothing to do with politics; religion consists of morals, education, and ideals which man should uphold. The basis of any religion, not only Islam, is morals and education for the Muslim and non-Muslim believer. This is not a political issue. When we construct a hotel, no Islamic rule is needed to construct it. When we intend to construct a new road, there is no disagreement on how to construct it, a road is a road. An airport is an airport; there is no Islamic and non-Islamic airport.

Likewise, there is nothing called Islamic rule; rule is to steer economic, social, and political matters. Man should dispose of these things himself whether he has faith or not. Involving religion in such matters is quackery and a maneuver to gain in the name of religion. At some point, the Muslim Brotherhood achieved rule in Sudan. They did nothing except chop off people's hands and legs. After that, they themselves were cut to pieces.

AL-QABAS: Brother leader, in Kuwait and the Gulf, the people look to the position of the Jamahiriyah toward the war raging between Iran and Iraq with extreme attention. Frankly speaking, your position toward this dispute is not very clear to the average person, particularly as one of the sides to the war is a fraternal Arab country which is supposed to receive aid from all the brothers. On what do you base your position toward the war raging between the two Muslim countries?

Al-Qadhdhafi: First of all, the shah ruled Iran earlier. He was extremely antagonistic to the Arab world. He was a racist. He loathed pan-Arab feelings. He occupied the islands of Tunb the greater and Tunb the lesser in addition to Abu Musa Island. He had ambitions in Shatt al-'Arab. He was an agent of the United States. He supplied the Israeli entity with oil. He also cooperated with Israel and South Africa. His country was a U.S. base. He was, moreover, extremely arrogant in dealing with the Arab nation.

We were the first people to call for fighting Iran, for using force and Arab armies to liberate the islands by force and to fight the shah. At that moment, Saddam came and signed the 1975 agreement in Algiers. He shook hands with the shah and relinquished Shatt al-'Arab. We were the side that rejected the agreement and the treaty. We also rejected relinquishing Shatt al-'Arab and the Arab islands and the truce with the shah. We demanded launching war against him. We noticed that he later visited Syria, Algeria, and Egypt. He even visited most of the Arab countries and convinced them of his position on the truce with the shah. We were the only side to call for a revolution against the shah. The Arabs used to say that this was an unheeded call and that it was illogical for Iran to rise against him because he was an ally of the United States and could not be deposed. We told them this was not true. Over the radio stations we actually began to call for a revolution directed toward Iran from Libya. Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Khamene'i, and Montazeri told me that they used to listen to these speeches when they were in prison and that these stations provided them with power. The Pakistani prime minister visited the shah and asked him about the situation. The shah told him: Ask your friend Al-Qadhdhafi. In other words we were the side to cause him trouble. Whenever explosions took place or whenever there was a development, **KEYHAN** and other papers reported that Al-Qadhdhafi or Libya

were behind it. The free people of Iran responded and launched the revolution. The shah collapsed and the revolution stood up against the United States and against Israel. The revolution allied itself with the Palestinian people and with the Arab nation against the racism of South Africa. Then, are we going to oppose the revolution? This is an immoral position. How can we oppose a revolution we called for and instigated? This can never be. This is an immoral position.

It is regrettable that Iran is engaged in a war with an Arab country. This situation is very critical for us since we cannot fight the revolution. But this revolution is clashing with an Arab country. This position is certainly very critical to us. Our position was very beneficial for Iran from the political aspect, as we did not make this war seem an Arab-Persian war. Had this war taken place during the shah's days it would certainly be an Arab-Persian war. We called for this war then. Now, this war is not between the Arab and the Persians. It is a war between the revolutionaries and the nonrevolutionaries.

AL-QABAS: Actually the facts contradict this. At the beginning you said that Iraq surrendered Shatt al-'Arab according to an agreement with the shah signed in 1975. However, as we know, Iraq did not surrender Shatt al-'Arab, but was in a weak position at that time. Had it not reached that agreement, Iraq could have lost a great deal. It happened that an agreement was reached on Shatt al-'Arab. When the war broke out, and the Iraqis reached the Iranian territories and later retreated, they asked that the war be stopped. They still ask this. Iran always refuses. This is on one hand. On the other, I cannot abandon my Arab nationality. I do not view that the brothers in Iran present this issue from an Arab point of view. In the end Iran is a Persian country. Iraq is an Arab country, its people are an Arab people. In addition to that, all the GCC states are affected by maritime piracy, attacks against oil tankers and commercial liners, and the sectarian conflicts that might emerge in the course of this war. Iraq is looking forward to peace. At least the friendly countries should try to convince Iran to stop the war. Moreover, Iran has not expressed good intentions by calling the Gulf by its correct name — it still calls it the Persian Gulf. It also has not expressed good will by giving back the Arab islands occupied during the shah's regime. As an Arab leader calling for Arabism and Arab unity, you know that this war is a war between an Arab country and a Persian country. I see that we express the same views as laymen, and not the views of our governments or those of Iraq. Do you know that all the peoples of the Gulf support Iraq?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The understanding of the layman is different from the actual fact. The Arab world's current stand is a sentimental one. The real stand is adopted by those well aware of the facts. This war is not between the Arabs and the Persians, it is between the U.S. bloc and an anti-U.S. bloc. We cannot fight on the side of King Husayn and Husni Mubarak, although both of them fight on the side of Saddam. What sort of war can Husni Mubarak wage? It is a U.S. war.

AL-QABAS: But Jordan and Egypt support Iraq as part of their pan-Arab duty and as an answer to the call for Arabism.

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, it is not for Arabism. If this is correct, then Mubarak must close down the embassy of the Israeli enemy in

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the defeated city [Cairo]. Why does pan-Arab sentiment emerge only when fighting against the Iranian revolution? Pan-Arabism begins in Sinai and never in Cairo. This is a U.S. war. I will not fight on the side of Husni Mubarak and King Husayn whatever the circumstances might be, even if Iran occupied half of the Arab homeland. As long as the Iranians fight against the United States, I will support them. That means Iran is right. The other side is the U.S. side. I will never be on the same side as the United States. How can that be?

AL-QABAS: But Iran is pushing Iraq in this direction because it refuses to end the war. Iraq was the first country to sever diplomatic relations with the United States in 1967. The Arab summit, which decided to sever Arab relations with Egypt during the Al-Sadat era, was convened in Iraq. Iraq demanded that Al-Sadat be brought to an Arab trial.

Al-Qadhdhafi: In my view this is pure quackery. How can Egypt change its stances and policies and still adhere to the Camp David accords? Iraq was the first country to recognize and to restore its relations with Egypt.

AL-QABAS: But Iraq has not restored its relations with Egypt.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Iraq would have respected the Arabs more if it had restored relations with Egypt. It restored everything else without restoring relations. It underrates the Arabs as if they are children. Saddam Husayn goes to Mubarak and they embrace each other. Everything is all right. We are not children that can be fooled by this talk. It is better that these relations are restored than to continue with what is happening now.

AL-QABAS: All right, in your view, how can this devastating war be halted?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The true fact is that we are in an embarrassing position. This stand is a U.S. and reactionary one and not a pan-Arab one [sentence as published]. When the shah was ruling Iran, Arabs did not consider Iran Persian, particularly the Gulf Arabs. It was a Muslim country and a neighboring ally because the United States was the common demoninator at that time. After Iran became revolutionary, the Arabs began calling it Persian. Iran is not Persian, never; this is a U.S. war between revolutionaries and nonrevolutionaries. For me, I cannot but side with the revolutionary camp; it does not honor me to fight with...even if Iran, and not the United States takes the entire Arab land.

AL-QABAS: If Iran is not Persian, why does it call the Gulf the Persian Gulf?

Al-Qadhdhafi: First, when Iranian President 'Ali Khamene'i visited Libya, I told him: The Arab islands were occupied by the shah. Why do you keep the islands and call the Gulf the Persian Gulf? When Khamene'i talked to me, he used the term Persian Gulf. I asked him: Excuse me, you say the Persian Gulf and we say that this Gulf is Arab, we should settle this point. He told me: Make other Arabs revolutionaries like you, and then call it the Persian Gulf, the Kuwaiti Gulf, or the Qurayshi [reference to the prophet's tribe]. I said the same about the islands. Khamene'i said: If the Arabs on the other coast are

revolutionaries and are against the United States, I will hand the islands over to them tomorrow. But if I give them the islands today, these islands will become U.S. bases against Iran. If the islands are given back to the Arabs, they will be given to the U.S. 7th Fleet.

AL-QABAS: But the settlement Iran is talking about refers to the establishment of the so-called Islamic revolution in Iraq. Do you agree with the principle of exporting the revolution from one country to another through war? Is this not a blatant intervention in countries' internal affairs and in the will of their people?

Al-Qadhdhafi: My stand is clear on this issue. I conveyed it to the Iranians. If Iran intends to change the situation in Iraq into the so-called imam's rule [wilayat al-faqih] or into a Shi'ite state or a state tied to the Supreme Council in Iran, I believe Iran in that case will be an imperialist; this will be Persian colonialism. In this case, we will fight Iran and will be the first to go to Iraq to fight. However, we have an opportunity to wait and see if Iran means what it says and whether it tries to annex Iraq, colonize it, and turn it into a Shi'ite state or over to the imam's rule. If this happens, we will fight it. This is very clear.

AL-QABAS: If you are against sectarianism in revolutions and say that revolution is one thing and attempting to impose the hegemony of a religion on another is something else, then this brings us automatically to what is currently taking place in Lebanon. During the past 10 years, the war in Lebanon has developed from a patriotic war against injustice and then against Israeli occupation — where it succeeded in expelling the Israeli invasion army — into sectarian fighting among the Sunnis, Shi'ites, Druze, and others. The internecine fighting broke out within the ranks of the Muslims themselves. This very thing may take place on the eastern front between Iran and Iraq. In other words, the matter may end up in a sectarian war between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. This is a grave matter that threatens the whole Gulf region.

Al-Qadhdhafi: I am against Sunnism, Shi'ism, and sectarianism. These are political parties fighting among themselves for power. They came into being after the revelation of the Koran. They have nothing to do with religion. If Sunnism is the prophet's tradition, then everyone should be Sunni. I do not believe that there is a Muslim who says he does not follow the prophet's tradition. Even the Iranians follow this tradition. This Shi'ite issue is legendary. It ended with Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. Whatever came after him has no value. I believe that contemporary Arabs sympathize with 'Ali or at least support him but their swords are sided with the United States!

AL-QABAS: During your meetings, did the Iranian leaders inform you that they oppose sectarianism?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Of course they are against it. They do not say that they are Shi'ites, Ja'farites, Persians, or Arabs. They say they are Muslims. This is their view and you should publish this in order to reveal the truth. This is their view. They say that they are fighting an Islamic revolution against the United States, Zionism, and racism. If they say that theirs is a Shi'ite revolution, then this means that it is sectarian by nature and is not fit to be a revolution.

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AL-QABAS: This is what they say. But facts reveal completely different things. This is clear at least to us in the Persian Gulf.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Let us then leave things until they become clear. If they are sectarians, our stand is clear on sectarianism. For me, sectarianism, reactionism, facism, and Zionism are in the same basket; there is no difference between them.

AL-QABAS: Well, how do you envision an end to the Iraq-Iran war?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Saddam's downfall.

AL-QABAS: Does that not constitute interference in Iraq's internal affairs?

Al-Qadhdhafi: This is Iran's stand.

AL-QABAS: But this, of course, is unacceptable. Do you accept what Egypt says, for example, that the condition for establishing relations with Libya is Al-Qadhdhafi's downfall?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The fact is that this is a kind of protest against regimes. We call for toppling them by all means, including a cold war. But Iran reached the point of a hot war. If this is interference in internal affairs, this rule should govern us all.

AL-QABAS: This regards the political aspect of the conflict. Regarding the military aspect, it could lead to land occupation and to attempts to topple the regime.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Why not? If one side can protest against the regime of the other side and can topple this regime, why should he not do so? Iraqis and Iranians are able to wage a war but others are not able to.

AL-QABAS: Amid political and military conflicts among countries and regimes, however, we forget the role of the people. These people are in most cases powerless.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Let them remain so until they become powerful.

AL-QABAS: Do you not think that the indefinite continuation of the Iraq-Iran war will provide an opportunity for the great powers to intervene in the Gulf, at least under the pretext of protecting their interests?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes. This requires unity among the Gulf countries to fill the void.

AL-QABAS: Do you believe that the establishment of the GCC fulfills this requirement?

Al-Qadhdhafi: No. They are two different things. I have proposed to them that they transform the GCC into a federal state so that it can fill the void.

AL-QABAS: To whom did you make this proposal?

Al-Qadhdhafi: To the leaders of the Gulf countries. I told them

that transforming the GCC into a federal state would fill the void concerning any possible developments in the Gulf war and concerning possible U.S. intervention or intervention in the region by other great powers. A federal state can fill the void concerning any developments in the Gulf war.

AL-QABAS: Do you believe that the Gulf states' situation and the differences in their political systems will help to establish the federal state of which you speak?

Al-Qadhdhafi: This state could be governed by following the same theory I spoke of concerning the Arab union plan.

AL-QABAS: Brother leader, let us move to another issue — the Palestinian question. It is clear that you have strong reservations about a peaceful settlement plan through the Amman accord between King Husayn and Yasir 'Arafat. What is the possible Arab alternative to achieve a just solution to the tragedy of the Palestinian people?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Fighting from the river to the sea [not further specified]. There is no other solution.

AL-QABAS: How can there be fighting while Arab borders are closed to the Palestinian resistance?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The war can begin against the Arab borders and they can be opened by force.

AL-QABAS: You presently have good relations with the brothers in Syria. Why do you not persuade them to open their borders first to the Palestinian resistance?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The problem is between Palestine and Syria. There are occupied Syrian territories, and the Palestinians say that they do not want to fight to liberate the Golan Heights. In the same way there are justifications to be found by those who are unwilling to fight for liberation. [laughs]

AL-QABAS: Actually, brother leader, the PLO has a strong argument which states that the Syrian blow upon it is designed to achieve hegemony over independent Palestinian decision-making. In your view, is this true?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I beg your pardon. To make Palestinian decisionmaking what?

AL-QABAS: We mean hegemony over Palestinian decisionmaking. Let's say hegemony by Syria for instance.

Al-Qadhdhafi: No. Palestinian decisionmaking suffers from an intrinsic impotence. It is not Syria's fault. Right now the fault lies with the Palestinians themselves — from Yasir 'Arafat to any other. None of them are up to the standard of the cause; their makeup, the fronts, the leaders, and the organization suffer defects in content and form. I am waiting for the unknown to emerge to save the Palestinians. Neither the uprising nor anything else will save them.

AL-QABAS: But differences exist in the Palestinian resistance between Yasir 'Arafat's wing and the wing supported by Syria.

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As an Arab leader, should you not play a role in this issue?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yasir 'Arafat has been a victim of a coup. How is it possible to reconcile with someone who has been the victim of a coup? This means that we should reconcile between the victim of a coup and those who carried it out (laughing). It means that we should reconcile between 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif and the Ba'th Party, and reconcile between the Ba'th Party of Syria and Iraq, and between King Faruq and the Egyptian Government, and between Numayri and the 6 April Revolution in Sudan. Is it possible to reconcile the coup sides? 'Arafat was the victim of a coup and that is it!

AL-QABAS: Do you think that Yasir 'Arafat is finished?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I cannot say if he is finished in the field of struggle, but he is overseas and is making efforts. He has become semi-exiled, a person similar to Osman Sabbe of Eritrea.

AL-QABAS: During the Beirut siege, your stance was against the departure of the resistance from Beirut. Do you still believe that this stance was right? If the resistance had stayed in Beirut, would the situation be different?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Certainly, if the resistance had stayed in Beirut, Abu 'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] would be a "hero" and the Israelis would be defeated. However, Abu 'Ammar's departure led him to this fate. When I cabled him and advised him not to go, he refused. We have seen steadfastness in southern Lebanon and how it led to the evacuation of the Israelis and before them the Americans, the French, and the Italians.

AL-QABAS: Brother leader, the committee for clearing the Arab atmosphere will visit Libya within the framework of its mission. What is your stance on the committee and the resolutions of the recent Casablanca summit?

Al-Qadhdhafi: We have a national problem, not a problem over borders. The Arabs should unite and liberate Palestine and work against the United States. Then there would be no problems. If we reconcile with them, no more hope will exist. We do not force anyone, but we have a national problem.

AL-QABAS: But the Arab leaders say that it is a duty to attend the meetings of the Arab summit in order to reach a minimum level of joint stances.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Fine, there is the ordinary summit conference before them — an ordinary summit, not an extraordinary summit. We will leave them to try all the things they say.

AL-QABAS: Are you optimistic about the upcoming ordinary summit conference?

Al-Qadhdhafi: No, I am not optimistic.

AL-QABAS: On what basis do you say that you are not optimistic?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The present Arab developments are bad.

AL-QABAS: Don't you think that these bad developments should be one of the motives to hold the Arab summit and ease this crisis?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The summit is not governed by current developments, but by other factors.

AL-QABAS: Brother leader, this has been a long working day for you and we have two questions left. I will go back to the issue of Iran, while brother 'Abd al-Karim has a question about Libyan-Tunisian relations and the situation inside Libya. The truth is, Iran is trying to involve Kuwait as a side in the dispute. This became obvious when Iran began seizing Kuwaiti ships and accusing Kuwait of opening its airspace to Iraq, of financing Iraq, and of other actions. Don't you think that this policy is serious and contributes to the expansion of war in the region?

Al-Qadhdhafi: In Iran, they talk about the expansion of the war, but they say they do not want to expand it, that the Arab countries entered the war against the Iranians. This is the logic of the Iranians who have made statements against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

AL-QABAS: The Iranian information media is launching a media campaign against Kuwait saying that Iraqi planes cross Kuwaiti airspace. How can the Iraqi planes reach Khark Island and hit it, while Iranian artillery cannot stop them?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I do not know. They are saying that the Iraqi planes take off from Kuwait.

AL-QABAS: This is not true. They cannot take off from Kuwait. Kuwait has denied this more than once.

Al-Qadhdhafi: The Iranians say that there is an Iraqi air base near Kuwaiti borders.

AL-QABAS: The south of Iraq is the north of Kuwait?

Al-Qadhdhafi: I do not know where the borders are. It means that this is Kuwait and this is Iraq and that there is an Iraqi base near the border being used by the Iraqi planes to raid Iran.

AL-QABAS: Let us talk about the recent crisis between Libya and Tunisia. It was noticed that the Tunisian voice was louder than the Libyan voice in this case. What exactly is the truth about the deportation of Tunisian laborers from Libya? Why did you decide to deport the Tunisian and Egyptian workers from Libya?

Al-Qadhdhafi: They are laborers who came from Arab and non-Arab countries to implement the 5-year plan which began in 1981 and concluded in 1985. All those countries knew that their laborers would return home this year. The truth is that the Tunisian Government knew this. It also knew that those laborers would be dispensed with. It was the Tunisians who asked for a few month's extension of the laborers' stay.

AL-QABAS: In that case what are the reasons for this clamor?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The Tunisian regime is unable to solve its citizen's problems. It likes to send its citizens to France or Libya and

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then put the blame on others. This is a known fact.

AL-QABAS: Kuwait played a role in this crisis. Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad met with you before he left for Tunis. I believe Libya agreed to receive the technical committee. What happened in this regard?

Al-Qadhdhafi: The Tunisians refused. They could have come to an understanding with us on good terms. We are not defending Libya in this case. If Libya is the oppressor, then the issue cannot be solved this way. It was the Tunisian media that almost led to the use of force. What would you do when someone curses you and tries to hit you? Wouldn't you hit him?

AL-QABAS: Does this mean that the military option was expected at a certain time?

Al-Qadhdhafi: It was expected in the view of the Tunisian media. Sir, we are unfair and we have undermined the workers' rights. There are joint committees which are welcome to come and solve the problems with us. We are not defending the Libyans, because they might have been unfair with the Tunisians. This may happen, but I am sure that it happens very rarely. However, the media should not respond to the matter in this way. I will tell you one thing that you can publish. Wasila Bourguiba [Habib Bourguiba's wife] and some Tunisian ministers contacted us and asked us to escalate the media campaign. They asked us not to ease the media campaign.

AL-QABAS: Has Wasila Bourguiba asked for that?

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes, together with some ministers. They said: Please do not stop the campaign and do not stop dismissing the workers.

AL-QABAS: What was your answer to that?

Al-Qadhdhafi: We didn't care about the issue. We have nothing to do with the local struggles there. However, they insisted that we escalate the campaign.

AL-QABAS: That is strange.

Al-Qadhdhafi: They say that this is a chance. They asked for a radio station to be used by the Tunisians to transmit to Tunisia. Thus, they asked for a radio broadcasting station that operates in the name of the voice of free Tunisia.

AL-QABAS: Strange.

Al-Qadhdhafi: Yes, this is Bourguiba's method.

AL-QABAS: How do you evaluate the visit paid by Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid to Tunisia following this problem?

Al-Qadhdhafi: We have done nothing to prompt them to unite against us. Let them unite and come to occupy our country. We are ready to withdraw our Army without defeat. We will withdraw our Army and say that they have defeated us.

AL-QABAS: You were quoted recently as saying that if a

confrontation between you and Egypt occurs, Egypt will not be able to stand up to Libya. Is this true?

Al-Qadhdhafi: If Egypt can stand up to the Israelis, it will stand up to Libya.

AL-QABAS: But, late President al-Sadat announced at Alexandria University in 1977 that he gave Al-Qadhdhafi a lesson he will never forget.

Al-Qadhdhafi: You know the Egyptians. Cleopatra, who was defeated in a war, escaped to Egypt and said that she had crushed the enemy and achieved victory. The Egyptians held festivities for her. This is an old story in Egypt. Ramses II obliterated all victories belonging to Ramses I and attributed them to himself.

AL-QABAS: We thank you for this interview, which we hope will not be our last with you. We still have many questions, but you must have much work to do. However, we thank you for giving me and my colleague 'Abd al-Karim the opportunity to hold an open dialogue with you. We also thank you for enabling us to differ with you in our views and for allowing us to have this quiet dialogue.

Al-Qadhdhafi: We welcome you in Libya. We are proud of the media in the Gulf, because it represents a sign of civilization. I think you have noticed that the Libyan media carries Gulf achievements in detail. In the past the newspapers and magazines carried only Egyptian works and there were only Egyptian plays and videotapes. We are happy for this Gulf advance. I am glad for the upturn taking place in the Gulf.

JANA Says Reports of Troop Movements Exaggerated *LD241057 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 0800 GMT 24 Sep 85*

[Text] New York, 24 Sep (JANA) — The American paper *THE NEW YORK TIMES* has given the lie to reports circulated by the Tunisian information organs alleging that Libyan forces are deployed along the artificial border zone between the Jamahiriyah and Tunisia. In an article the paper says that it has now become a fact that reports published about movements by Libyan forces on the Libyan-Tunisian border are exaggerated. The paper cited Western diplomats denying such reports and saying that the measures taken on Libyan territory are quite normal.

JANA on Succession Struggle Over Bourguiba *LD241611 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1400 GMT 24 Sep 85*

[Text] Kuwait, 24 Sep (JANA) — KUNA has attributed an informed Tunisian source as having said that the Tunisian Army today has been placed on extreme alert. This measure reflects the intensification of the political struggle between the Tunisian factions over the succession of President Habib Bourguiba, who since yesterday has been in the throes of death after his health deteriorated.

It is worth mentioning that the Tunisian National Defense Minister admitted the day before yesterday that there are deep disputes between the two organizations over Bourguiba's succes-